

Japan's Justice Minister retracts war remarks

TOKYO, May 6: Facing widespread condemnation from other Asian nations, Justice Minister Shigeto Nagano on Friday retracted his remarks defending Japan's role in World War II, reports AP.

But several major political



Justice Minister Shigeto Nagano addressing a press conference. — AFP photo

parties in Japan, including one in the ruling coalition, said the retraction was not enough and called on Nagano to resign.

Nagano had said Japan was not an aggressor in the war, and called the "rape of Nanking," in which Japanese soldiers massacred many thousands of Chinese civilians, a fabrication.

"My remarks the other day about past history were inappropriate," he told a news conference. "I would like to retract those comments."

China, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam denounced the remarks, made in an interview with the Mainichi newspaper published Wednesday.

Hata called Nagano's remarks inappropriate and telephoned Nagano Thursday night to reprimand him.

Clinton issues guidelines for peacekeeping

US troops will never be under direct foreign command

WASHINGTON, May 6: President Clinton issued guidelines Thursday designed to limit UN peacekeeping operations, reduce US share of payments, and assure that American combat forces would never be under direct foreign command, reports AP.

Madeline Albright, US Ambassador to the United Nations, told Congress the plan, which follows an extensive administration review, would help ensure that the UN peacekeeping operations the United States helps finance will be in America's interest.

Anthony Lake, the president's national security adviser, said that because "the needs for peacekeeping have outrun the resources for peacekeeping, it's important that we ask the tough questions" about when and where to support UN operations.

"The reality is we cannot often solve other people's problems; we can never build their nations for them," he told a White House briefing.

An effort has been underway since the early days of the Clinton administration to define circumstances under which the United States would participate in UN peacekeeping operations and to figure out a way to keep the cost

down.

The United States currently pays about 30 per cent of the cost of UN peacekeeping and Clinton has said he wants that figure reduced to 25 per cent.

The effort gained greater urgency after 18 US soldiers were killed Oct. 3 in Somalia.

After that incident, Clinton conceded that the United States had erred in allowing a UN-directed humanitarian mission become "a waging of conflict and a highly personalized battle."

Even before the deaths in Somalia, the administration ran into sharp criticism when it was disclosed its peacekeep-

ing plan would allow US combat troops to serve under foreign commanders.

The plan was quickly shelved after members of Congress denounced it as "a nutty idea" and unworkable.

Lake emphasized that US combat troops would never serve "under foreign commanders" although they might be part of a UN force that was under "foreign operational control."

The guidelines issued by the White House stated that "the president retains and will never relinquish command authority over US forces."

Fresh bid to end Azeri-Armenian clash fails

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan, May 6: A fresh attempt to reach agreement between ethnic Armenians and Azeris on the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh failed on Thursday when Azerbaijan refused to sign an accord, reports Reuters.

The deputy speaker of the Azeri Parliament said his side objected to a clause in the draft agreement providing for peacekeeping forces from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) being brought into the conflict zone.

Alyyaddin Jalilov told reporters in Bishkek, capital of the Central Asian state of Kyrgyzstan, that the document, which had been approved by other parties to multi-lateral talks, did not mention occupation of parts of Azerbaijan by Armenian forces.



Women supporters belonging to the ethnic Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) protest in front of the party headquarters in Karachi May 5. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government offered to negotiate with MQM, but refused to withdraw criminal cases against its leaders. — AFP photo

Deadlock in ME disarmament talks

DOHA, May 6: Middle East disarmament talks ended in deadlock here Thursday with Arab and Israeli delegates unable to agree on a statement of principles, on arms control, conference sources said, reports AP.

The delegations agreed to re-submit a draft statement of principles to their respective governments before returning to more talks, the date and venue of which have still to be fixed, according to US representative Robert Einhorn.

The draft plan comprises both military and political

chapters. The latter rejected by Saudi Arabia.

"We categorically reject the political section of the project, which is aimed at normalizing relations between Arab states and Israel," Prince Turki bin Mohammed Al-Saud, head of the Saudi delegation, told AFP.

"Most Arab participants also rejected this part of the text," Prince Turki said.

David Irvy, leader of the Israeli negotiating team, stressed his government's commitment to the entire plan, including the political chapter.

"The political section (of the accord) is necessary because it offers a working framework for future meetings," he argued.

The draft statement drawn up at a meeting in Cairo in January proposed a number of confidence-building measures and the creation of a zone where weapons of mass destruction would be banned.

Prince Turki said the statement should cover "only military questions, including the elimination of weapons of mass destruction."

Irvy said he did not under-

stand Saudi Arabia's objections, the kingdom had rejected a US proposal to hold another meeting in June in Vienna, judging that date too close, he added.

Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jabr Al-Thani sounded an optimistic note. "We hope to achieve better results in the future, making progress in line with the continuation in the peace process in the Middle East," he said.

The delegates approved in principle the creation of a crisis prevention centre in Qatar.

BRIEFLY

NATO chief postpones US tour:

NATO Secretary-General Manfred Woerner has postponed indefinitely for "personal reasons" a planned visit to the United States next week, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation sources said Thursday, AFP reports from Brussels.

Woerner, who is 59 years old, was scheduled to meet President Bill Clinton as well as other US officials during the week-long stay.

20 Kurds killed in Turkey:

Twenty rebels of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and three government soldiers were killed in several clashes in Turkey's southeast region in the past 24 hours, a official statement said on Thursday, Xinhua reports from Ankara.

Emergency regional governor's office said that the government forces killed 12 PKK rebels in Genc town of Bingol province when they were carrying out an operation in the region.

Blast kills 3 in Moscow:

A man detonated a bomb in his suitcase in a powerful explosion that killed him and two passersby in central Moscow on Thursday, AP reports from Moscow.

Two other people were injured in the 2:25 PM blast, Russian television and the Interfax news agency reported. Police said they suspected the motive was suicide since the man was carrying the suitcase when the bomb went off, but had no immediate proof, the reports said.

14 killed in Indian train mishap:

Fourteen people were killed when a speeding train crashed into a jeep at a railroad crossing in southern India late Thursday, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

Forty others were injured in the accident in Mehmbaob Nagar district in the coastal state of Andhra Pradesh, the news agency said.

Police said 18 people were travelling in the jeep.

Two US jets crash in S Korea:

Two US air force jet fighters on a routine training mission crashed over the Yellow Sea Friday, US military officials said, AP reports from Seoul.

One pilot was rescued, the other was missing, said Jim Coles, spokesman of the US military command in Seoul. The condition of the rescued pilot was unknown.

The planes collided 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) off Boryong, a city on South Korea's west coast, over the Yellow Sea, the national Yonhap news agency said.

Police raid pro-apartheid bastions in Pretoria

JOHANNESBURG, May 6: Bastions of the pro-apartheid white right-wing were raided at dawn Friday by police searching for explosives and weapons, reports AP.

The raids were part of an ongoing probe of the extremists, although not yet "officially" linked to the investigation into a string of bombings that killed 19 people and injured 170 as the country's first multiracial elections were beginning, said Capt Evan Johnson of the South African Police.

Law officers sealed off the compound of Radio Pretoria, an unlicensed station that served as a beacon for those opposed to South Africa's multiracial elections.

Police also raided the Wonderboom Fort, a historic site near Pretoria occupied since March 13 by a small band of commandos who ringed it with sandbags and razor wire.

Five homemade shotguns and two radios from the South African Defense Force were seized at the fort, Johnson said.

There was no resistance from the extremists, some of whom have vowed armed opposition to the transition to black majority rule.

There were no immediate reports of arrests.

The search warrants were issued in response to tips received Thursday. The investigators were looking for firearms, bomb-making devices, illegal broadcasting equipment and material from the defence forces, Johnson said.

Police also had been told training of commandos was taking place at the two sites. There is a trailer park at the Radio Pretoria compound and right-wing sympathizers from the region often gather there on weekends.

The station stopped broadcasting April 30 following a Supreme Court ruling. Its supporters said Thursday they would decide on May 13 whether to resume broadcasts before getting a licence from the Independent Broadcasting Authority, which will oversee the opening of the airways that had been tightly controlled by the apartheid government.

The extreme element of the country's splintered white right wing has vowed never to be government by blacks and demands a homeland for the Afrikaner descendants of South Africa's first white settlers.

A more moderate wing participated in the elections under the banner of the Freedom Front and received about 2 per cent of the vote.

Ramiz Alia, 9 others to go on trial

TIRANA, May 6: Ramiz Alia, Albania's last communist president and heir of Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha is to go on trial with nine others on charges of abuse of power, a Tirana district court spokesman said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Alia, former Prime Minister Adil Carcani, Manush Myftiu, a former deputy prime minister and Rita Marko, former vice president will also face charges of misappropriation of state property at the trial which will open on May 21, the spokesman said.

Fighting continues in Kigali as peace talks end in confusion

NAIROBI, Kenya, May 6: After another failed attempt to gain a cease-fire, government and rebel troops exchanged heavy mortar and small arms fire in Rwanda's capital for a fourth straight day Friday, reports AP.

Residents of Kigali who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front appeared to be gaining ground in a final push to capture the capital after more than a month of fighting.

Two days of peace talks ended in confusion Thursday night in the northern Tanzanian town of Arusha. Radio Tanzania reported the rebels had signed a cease-fire agreement with Rwanda's interim government,

but the rebels later denied it.

The rebels are from Rwanda's minority ethnic group, the Tutsis. They claim the interim government is headed by extremists from the majority Hutu ethnic group and blame it for the savage massacres that have ripped the country apart.

"There's still intensive firing," UN spokesman Abdul Kabia said Friday morning by telephone from Kigali. "They shelled around the hotel Milles Colines and the Ministry of Defence, but we have not been able to determine casualties."

More than 300 people have been sheltering for weeks at the hotel under UN protection, but the peacekeepers

have not been able to move them to a safer location. Kabia said the United Nations was still trying to negotiate a safe passage for the hotel residents with the army high command.

Kigali's airport, its only link with the outside world, remained closed Friday. Gen. Romeo Dallaire, the UN force commander, shut it down Thursday after a Canadian military cargo plane was shot at shortly after landing.

The Hercules C-130 had been delivering the only aid regularly reaching the embattled city. Kabia said it still had not been determined which side in the conflict fired on the plane. There were no in-

juries.

"Our humanitarian efforts have been very restricted by this intense exchange of fire all over the city," Kabia said.

The Canadian plane had just taxied to a halt and crewmen were beginning to unload its cargo of biscuits and bottled water when shots were fired across the tarmac, said Mark Doyle of the BBC who was a passenger.

"The loadmaster shouted, 'Let's get out of here, and the plane raced off with the rear cargo door still down,' Doyle said.

The army and the rebels have been trading small arms fire and mortar shells across the airport for days. But under

an agreement worked out by the United Nations, they usually stop shooting long enough to allow relief planes to land and take off.

The Canadian plane has been making two flights a day from Nairobi to Kigali with supplies for the 450 UN peacekeepers still there, plus food and medicine for several thousand refugees under UN protection in the capital.

The UN peacekeeping force, reduced last month from 2,500 to under 500, is lightly armed. Its mandate does not allow it to become involved in the fighting.

The death toll in Rwanda has been variously estimated by the United Nations and aid

Off the Record



File Photo dated July 1993 of American film star Richard Gere and his wife, super model Cindy Crawford. The couple have advertised in the London Times May 5 in a full page ad, estimated to have cost 2244 pounds (appx 3,350 USD) to deny their marriage is on the rocks. —AFP photo

'Dial 168 for your horoscope'

BEIJING: Want to know what the future holds? Haven't read your horoscope today? Dial 168.

The official Guangming Daily newspaper said Friday that 'Dial A Horoscope' telephone lines have hit China, but not everybody welcomes the new service, reports AP.

Chinese already dial 168 for the latest share prices, road traffic conditions, and other tidbits of useful information. But the Guangming Daily said some 168s also offer to read your fortune, interpret your dreams or analyse your character according to your blood group.

The newspaper said the service was a hot topic of conversation among Chinese, with critics accusing the state phone companies of dispensing advice which "smacks of superstition" and supporters saying Chinese want more services like 168 as they get richer.

On dialing 168, "all the user has to do is enter his birth date into the telephone to receive his fortune," the newspaper said. The phone company then tacks a fortune telling fee onto the users bill.

The newspaper questioned if horoscope lines were a legitimate service, or if the phone companies were merely chasing profit.

"People can't help but ask: Is this 'service' for you, or for themselves?" it queried.

One 168 number in Kunshan city, near Shanghai, east China, took 85,000 calls in January, the newspaper said. That jumped to 250,000 calls in March after it began offering the latest stock prices, it said.

Churchill called Chinese 'pig-tails' and Indians 'baboons'

LONDON, May 6: A controversial new biography of legendary British wartime leader Winston Churchill on Thursday levelled fresh charges that he was a racist who called the Chinese 'pig-tails' and the Indians 'baboons,' reports Reuters.

The book by Clive Ponting is the latest in a series of biographies that have sought to debunk Churchill, who died in 1965 aged 90, and have accused him of being a white supremacist.

The pugnacious cigar-smoking Churchill traditionally has been revered in Britain as a national hero who could do no wrong and was above reproach.

In a revisionist view of the man credited with saving Britain from defeat by Nazi Germany, Ponting said Churchill also suffered a severe alcohol problem and believed in sterilising the mentally degenerate.

Winston Churchill, grandson of the former prime minister and now a conservative member of parliament, has tried to have the book banned.

Another historian to question the Churchill legend recently was Andrew Roberts who claimed Churchill's racist views remained unchanged throughout his 50 years in politics and two stints as British Prime Minister from 1940-1945 and 1951-55.

Feminists say Ramos' govt a 'world class pimp'

MANILA: Philippine feminists say President Fidel Ramos' government is acting as a 'world class pimp' in staging the 1994 Miss Universe Pageant in Manila, reports Reuters.

Gabriela, an organisation of 48,000 women activists, said in a statement yesterday the beauty contest would only promote the country's already thriving sex industry, which attracts men from all over the world.

"The Ramos regime is catapulting itself into the status of a world-class pimp," it said.

Ramos, a staunch Methodist, has said the pageant would help promote tourism.

Beauty queens from more than 70 countries are taking part in the May 21 pageant.

New genus of dinosaur found in Antarctica

WASHINGTON: Fossilized remains found within 400 miles of the South Pole belong to a new genus of dinosaur whose most distinctive feature is a bony crest rising above its brow, palaeontologists said Thursday, reports Reuters.

The dinosaur, officially named *Cryolophosaurus ellioti*, or 'frozen crested reptile,' most closely resembles the allosaurus dinosaur common to North America, a two-legged creature similar to the tyrannosaurs featured in the popular movie Jurassic Park.

"You take the allosaurus, make it a little smaller and put a crest on it and there you have it," William Hammer, a palaeontologist at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, told Reuters.

The dinosaur, about 30 feet (nine metres) long, represents both a new genus and a new species that roamed Antarctica in the Jurassic period some 200 million years ago, he said.

The large, curved crest was grooved, at least 10 inches high, and somewhat resembled an ornamental hair comb.

Flanked by two small horns, the comb probably was not strong enough to use as a weapon but, rather, likely served much like a peacocks tail, as a way to attract the opposite sex.

Fire at Russian N-plant

MOSCOW, May 6: Fire broke out Friday at the world's second largest fast-breeder nuclear reactor, in Russia's Ural Mountains, but officials said radiation levels at the reactor were normal and there were no injuries, reports AP.

Smoke poured from the Belayarsk reactor, 40 kilometers (25 miles) north of the city of Yekaterinburg, and firefighters were unable to put it out, said Yuri Rogozhin, a spokesman for the Atomic Industry Inspectorate.

The cloud of smoke was caused by leaking liquid sodium, which is used as a cooling agent to transfer heat away from the reactor.